# The Passing of Sarah Brown

## Daughter of John Brown of Harper's Ferry

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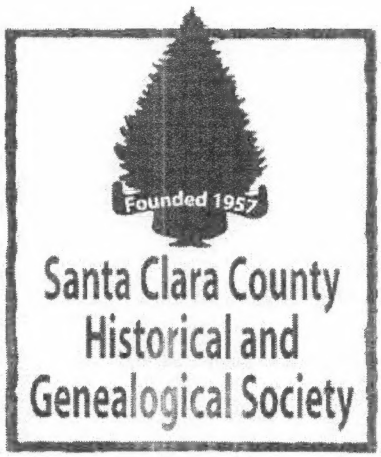

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THE PASSING OF SARAH BROWN
Daughter of John Brown of Harper's Ferry
- A Pioneer of Saratoga -

Sarah Brown was born at Akron, Ohio, September 11, 1846, one of the younger of twenty children, and died at Campbell, California, California, June 30, 1916. Her father, John Brown, famous in American history for his precipitate anti-slavery leadership, was a native of Torrington, Connecticut, and a direct descendant of one of the Mayflower Pilgrims. When but five years of age he came to Ohio with his parents, growing up there to the trade of a tanner and currier, later becoming a wool dealer. The mother of Miss Brown was Mary A. Day, a native of New York.

The John Brown family lived at Akron until 1854, when the Territory of Kansas was opened for settlement. Four of the sons soon followed by their father, then went to that region to take part in the contest to settle Kansas as a "free" state, against the pro-slavery settlers. With the growing seriousness and violence of that struggle, and after the killing of one of the sons, the others and their father returned to Ohio; the latter to move his family from Akron to North Elba, Essex county, New York, away from the danger which he feared for them in the more southern state. Here land was given him by Congressman Gerritt Smith of New York, afterward one of the four men who planned the Harper's Ferry seizure, and here the family lived til 1863; during which time the dauntless and tempestuous career of John Brown passed to its climax in his victorious Ossawatomie fight, and, in 1859, to its end in the ill-fated raid

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upon the Federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. This place in the Adirondacks, now a New York state park, became the burial place of the noted abolitionist, and fifty years later, by order of President McKinley, the bones of his two sons who fell at Harper's Ferry were exhumed and reburied with military honors beside the father.

Sarah Brown was educated in the public schools of New York, in the Fort Edward Institute, where she studied art under Mary A. Lathbury, and in Concord, Mass., in a private school conducted by F. B. Sanborn, another of the planners of the Harper's Ferry insurrection. With the latter, now an aged and feeble man, Miss Brown was but recently in correspondence, taking great pleasure in sending him a copy of the last of her photographs.

While in Concord Miss Brown boarded in the A. Bronson Alcott family, being intimate with Louisa Alcott and her sisters.

In the autumn of 1863 the Brown family, consisting of the mother, three daughters, one son and his family, removed to Decorah, Iowa, and from there started for California the following spring, on a six months' journey behind an ox team. In the entire train were about two hundred persons, and those who have heard Miss Brown narrate the experiences of that trip, or who chanced to see her in the Blossom Festival historical pageant several years ago, garbed as when she crossed the plains and riding in an ox-drawn "prairie schooner", can well surmise that the expedition

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was not without the elements of monotony, hardship, peril and excitement which belong to that rugged period of American history.

The family reached Red Bluff, Tehama county, in the fall of '64, where Sarah, then a girl of eighteen, began her school teaching. In 1870 the family removed to Rohnerville, Humboldt county, and engaged in sheep business; Miss Brown there resuming her public school teaching for some time, and also giving music lessons. In 1881, she, her mother, her youngest sister, Ellen, and husband, James Fablinger, came to Santa Clara county and settled on the place which still bears the name of the John Brown ranch, on the first mountain summit overlooking Saratoga. From '81 to '85 Miss Brown was employed as assistant weigher in the San Francisco mint. The widow of John Brown died in San Francisco in 1884, where the daughter had taken her to live with herself that she might afford her mother better medical care. The same year the sister and brother-in-law left the mountain place and settled on Saratoga avenue.

It was after leaving San Francisco and rejoining her sister's family that Miss Brown began to take that large and uplifting place in our community which she has ever so nobly and abundantly filled. For several years after coming to Saratoga she gave painting and drawing lessons in and about this place, and in Los Gatos, San Jose and Santa Clara; also giving much of her time and energy to the interests of

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her sister's ranch, Mr. Fablinger being obliged to be away.